

February 9, 2021

Utility Services: Water, Sewer & Solid Waste Policies

City Services: The City of Alma is dedicated in providing our Utility Customers with professional services at a reasonable cost. All accounts are important, and the City of Almas' goal is to serve the public in a courteous, friendly, and helpful manner. The City staff is also to protect the assets of the City. These services are available without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap, religion, or national origin.

Utility Services Provided to Billing: Utility services are provided in advance of billing each month, then it is important that the Customer maintain a good credit rating with the City. Failure to regularly pay on time will result in the loss of good credit rating and can result in the discontinuance of service either temporarily or permanently.

Utility Services Provided:

City Utility Services are:

- a. Water Service delivered at the water meter.
- b. Sewer Service received at the City ROW.
- c. Solid Waste Services which include:
 1. Weekly household garbage Roll Cart Collection.
 2. Weekly Yard Waste Collection at the City ROW.
 3. Saturday Drop off Center to receive discarded household debris.

Customer Responsibilities: Each resident may apply for Utility Services. The customer promises to pay for Utility Services in a prompt and timely manner, consistent with the City Policies. If the customer fails to pay in a timely manner, then they will be subject to having penalties levied against their account. Serious default upon payment of their account can **result in:**

- a. Closing of the account
- b. Filing claims with a collection agency

If the applicant has previously been a Customer then a New account cannot be opened until **ALL** existing balances due are **Paid in FULL**.

Deposits: All new accounts (tenants and owners) will be required to pay a security deposit as follows when opening a new utility service account as follows:

- a. Residential Service: \$75.00
- b. Commercial Service: \$125.00

The need for a deposit is, Utility Services (like other utility services) are delivered in advance of billing and payment for the services delivered.

Closing an Account: Deposits will be refunded upon the Customers' request to close the account. The final meter reading will be taken, the meter is to be locked and a final bill prepared. Any unpaid balance will be deducted from the accounts' security deposit. If the amount due is greater than the deposit available, then the Customer will be responsible for the remaining balance.

IT IS THE CUSTOMERS RESPONSIBILITY TO NOTIFY THE CITY WATER BUSINESS OFFICE (912-632-5917) OF THE DATE THAT SERVICE IS NO LONGER REQUIRED. THE CUSTOMER IS ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY UNPAID BALANCE.

Application for New Accounts: New Customers are to apply for new utility service at the Water Business Office at City Hall. Both the electrical utility service and City utility service must be in the same name of the Customer (responsible party). The responsible part is to furnish at least the following and other information, if needed:

1. Name of the responsible party (Customer) for all payments.
2. Physical address of the location requesting service.
3. Mailing address, if different from the physical address.
4. Phone numbers- Residence, Office, Cell, etc.
5. Verification of Electrical Service at the location.
6. Payment of Deposit.
7. Payment of any previously unpaid balances.
8. Other information that may be determined to be important to maintain contact with the customer.

Monthly Meter Readings: Water meters are read each month. The readings are performed with the use of radio readings and the balance by hand reading. In the unusual circumstance where the meter is unable to be read by any means, an average will be done as a last measure. The meter will be repaired or replaced as soon as possible.

Monthly Billing & Payments: City utility services are provided in advance of each month. Bills are mailed prior to or on the first (1st) of each month. The due date is the (10th) of each month, unless the (10th) falls on a weekend or holiday. The next business day is honored for the (10th) if this occurs.

First Billing Cycle-Penalties-Late Payments: If a payment in the first billing cycle is not received by the close of business on the **10th**, then the account is designated as late. Payments received on the morning of the **11th** from the **USPS (Mail)** or the overnight **Drop Box** are **credited as being on time**. Any partial payments are then applied to the balance due. Then a **Late Penalty of 5% is applied to the account balance**.

Second Billing Cycle-Penalty & Cutoff: If the account balance has not been paid by the **10th** of the month of the second billing cycle, then an **additional 5%** penalty will be added to the total balance due. Then, the account will be placed on the **Cut-Off List**. If the balance is **not Paid in Full prior** to the actual cut-off, then the following:

- a. The cut-off will occur.
- b. A cut-off Fee of \$40.00 will be applied to the balance.

The Meter **Cut-Off** includes **Locking** the meter. The account balance **MUST BE PAID IN FULL** prior to unlocking the meter and re-establishing services. Customer service will be restored on the same business day if the account is paid prior to **2:00 pm**. Customers that pay after **2:00 pm** will have service restored on the next business day.

Third Billing Cycle-Closing Accounts & Forfeiture of Deposits: If the account balance has not been paid by the third billing cycle, the account will be:

- a. Account Closed
- b. The security deposit will be applied toward the outstanding balance.
- c. A Letter of Notice of Account Closure will be sent to the Responsible Party at the registered mailing address.
- d. The meter will remain locked and closed.
- e. This customer is **NO** longer eligible for standard credit rating.

Loss of Credit: If a customer has a history of failure to pay the account balance on time, the customer will lose the standard credit rating. For active accounts that have lost the standard credit rating, the account balances are to be paid in full in the First Billing Cycle each month. Loss of credit rating can occur in several ways, such as the following:

- a. Failure to pay the account after the **Third Billing Cycle**.
- b. Having the **meter locked** after the Second Billing Cycle for Three (**3**) or more times in an **18-month** period.
- c. Having entered into a **Balance Due Agreement**.

Balance Due Agreement: A Customer that has an outstanding balance can apply to enter into a Balance Due Agreement, if approved by the Water Business Office. All agreements are to be signed by the City Manager. Terms of the Agreements are that the Utility bill is to be paid on time each month, plus an agreed upon amount is to be paid towards the outstanding balance due. Failure to meet the Terms will result in the water meter being locked immediately. If no response, then the account will be closed.

Re-establishment of Credit: Standard Credit Rating can be re-established if the Customer pays **twenty-four (24) consecutive monthly payments on time.**

Water Meter Ownership: All water meters are the property of the City of Alma. Installation fees are for the cost of installing a connection from the water main to the property boundary for providing the water connection to the private property. This fee is not for the purchase of the water meter. City water valves are not designed to be used to cut off water flow to the residence or business by anyone other than a City representative. The Building Codes and the City require the landowner to install a separate valve to cut off & on water service on the out-flow side of the water meter. The property owner is responsible for all leaks or other plumbing problems caused from plumbing system failures within the property owners plumbing system.

Installation of Water Meters & Sewer Connections: Water meters and related cut-off valves are the property of the City of Alma. On occasion of delinquent bills, the City may cut off and then "Lock" the meter. Any tampering or damage to the water meter, valve, lock, or any other component of the water and sewer connections to a property can result in a charge by the City Police and citation to the Municipal Court for "Damage to Public Property".

Approved by Mayor and City Council February 9, 2021 Meeting:

Mayor Larry Taylor